Time and Again

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Time and Again

by EstherA2J

Summary

Clark meets Lex for the first time... for the second time.

Notes

See the end of the work for notes

Second Chance

The roaring in his ears is louder than every train and every plane on earth put together. And while it's normal for him to be able to hear such things, they don't ever sound so *close*. And, usually, he can filter sounds, listen for what he actually *wants* to hear. Multicoloured lights flicker against his eyelids, bright and sharp in a way that would likely be painful were he human. He cannot open his eyes—or he doesn't want to. It feels like he is flying, but with no control, hurtling blindly at a speed near the limit of his abilities.

He hits the water so hard it might as well have been concrete. A human would have died instantly, but the water gives way for him, closing around his body and filling his nose, ears, and mouth with liquid ice that tastes of metal and oil. He finally opens his eyes as the water falls away, and he is kneeling on the shore with no memory of climbing from the river, his breath short, and water dripping into his face.

Brilliant eyes like sun-kissed ocean waves meet his, wide and shocked. Lex. Lifting his head from where he lies on the rocky ground, Lex stares up at him with no hint of the anger and hatred Clark is accustomed to seeing whenever circumstances force them to meet. Instead, there is only wonder. "I could have sworn I hit you," Lex says, and recognition hits Clark like Lex's car hit him so many years—a few minutes—ago.

This is not the Lex he knows—this is the Lex he used to know. Twenty-one years old, and not yet jaded and ruined by life, this is Lex before… before everything went wrong.

"Clark!" He looks up at the shout, and his heart squeezes even tighter in his chest. Jonathan Kent, young and *alive*, is boot skiing down the embankment from the road. "Son, are you all right?" God, he's younger than Clark is—was?

"I'm—" Clark's throat closes and he swallows hard. "I'm okay." It's not exactly the truth, but his wounds are not physical—they so rarely are.

Jonathan grabs Clark's shoulders, and Clark pushes himself to his feet and tries not to smile indulgently as his father checks him over for injuries. This is a Jonathan who doesn't yet know the extent of his son's abilities, and still worries that Clark will be hurt—not that Jonathan ever stopped worrying about Clark no matter what

happened. Satisfied that Clark is telling the truth, Jonathan steps back, keeping one hand on his shoulder. “Who’s the maniac who was driving that car?”

“That would be me.” Lex has gotten to his feet. He sways alarmingly, and Clark automatically catches his arm, steadying him. Lex nods a thanks and continues, “Lex Luthor.” He offers Jonathan his hand, but Jonathan ignores it; he shrugs and turns back toward Clark whose heart clenches at the evidence that Lex is already so used to such treatment. “Thanks for saving my life.”

His delight at seeing Jonathan alive now somewhat shadowed, Clark takes the hand his father rebuffed. “Clark Kent. And I’m just glad I could help.”

“If there’s any way I can repay you—” Lex begins, but Jonathan cuts him off, tugging Clark away by the arm, a frown twisting his face.

“Drive slower.”

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It can’t be real, and yet, it is. He is fifteen again, back in Smallville with a second chance to avoid the mistakes he made the first time. Please, God, let it be real.

Weird experiences are far from being new to Clark. Even before he discovered he was from another planet, a science fiction story come to life, he knew he was different. Sometimes he wished he could have had a normal life, but he soon realized that there *was* no such thing—working in the news business, he couldn’t avoid that knowledge. After everything he’d seen and done, Clark had begun to think nothing could surprise him. Then *this* happened.

Of course, the shiny new truck is not a surprise this time. He grins at Lex’s looping handwriting: ‘Dear Clark, drive safely. Always in your debt, the maniac in the Porsche.’ He almost forgot that Lex had a sense of humour… has a sense of humour. Glancing up at his mother, he lets his smile fall into a grimace. “Dad won’t let me keep this.”

“You’ll have to talk to him,” Martha replies diplomatically. Although she is so young now, he can see the politician she becomes, the mother and widow who lost so much, and he has to turn away so she doesn’t see the tears in his eyes.

Blinking furiously, he gets himself back under control and manages a

smile and nod. She gives him an odd look, but he leaves before she can say anything else. If anyone is going to notice that Clark is not himself, it will be Martha. She knows her son, and she's a lot smarter than he gave her credit for back when he was fifteen the first time. She probably knew, or guessed, how he felt about Lex, though she never said anything.

Jonathan turns off the wood chipper as Clark approaches, and the deja vu is so strong he nearly stops in his tracks. Somehow, he makes himself keep walking.

Leaning on the chipper, Jonathan takes off his gloves and slaps them against his leg, sending a cloud of dust into the air. "I know how much you want it, son, but you can't keep it."

Clark can't quite force himself to say the whiny entitled words he said the first time this happened, so he just nods. "What if… you drive the new one and…" No, he can't even say that. He sighs. He *wants* to take it back, to have an excuse to see Lex, to restart the friendship he lost.

"Clark…" Jonathan sighs too. "Gifts from Luthors are never just gifts. There's always strings attached. Do you remember Mr. Bell? We used to go fishing on his property. How about Mr. Guy? He used to send us pumpkins every Halloween. Well, Lionel Luthor promised to cut them in on a deal. He sent them flashy gifts. Once they'd sold their property, he went back on his word. He had them evicted, son."

Right. Shit. Lionel Luthor. Somehow Clark forgot—or didn't want to remember—that he would be alive now. "Lex isn't his father." Not yet. And if Clark has anything to say about it, he never will be. Not this time.

"No, he's not." Jonathan sighs again, heavily. "I just want to make sure that you know where the money came from that bought that truck, Clark. I'm sorry; I know you're upset. That's normal."

"Normal." Clark closes his eyes for a moment. Last time, he stuck his arm in the chipper and turned it on, probably panicking Jonathan for the time it took him to realize Clark wasn't hurt. He's no longer that stupid teenager who didn't know how that might affect his father's heart, let alone how much new blades cost, so he just says, "Dad, I'm not *normal*. Lex's car hit me… at 60 miles an hour."

Jonathan tucks his gloves into his jeans pocket, his expression turning even more serious. "It's time, son. It's time for you to know."

Clark makes a sudden decision. “I already know, Dad.” He’s spent his life lying to so many people, and he’s so tired of it. He chews on his lower lip. “Dad, there’s something I have to tell you and Mom.”

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The late afternoon sunlight pours in through the windows. Clark faces his parents across the kitchen island, wondering if they’ll believe him. Yes, they already believe in a few unbelievable things, such as life on other planets, but this is a bit bigger than that. “Dad was going to show me the ship in the storm cellar, but… I already know I’m not human.”

Their eyes widen, and Martha takes Jonathan’s hand, her fingers tight around his. She opens her mouth, but then closes it again.

“I…” His gaze drops and he studies his hands, lying flat on the countertop. “Something happened that day on the bridge. I have memories I shouldn’t have. I remember growing up, moving to Metropolis and having a career, living a full life, being an adult.” Clark wets his lips. “It feels just as real as this does.” He swallows and turns his hands, threading his fingers together. “More real, in some ways. To me, this all happened years ago, and I’m living it all over again.”

He’s not sure they believe him, but they are just as supportive as always. He has to blink away tears again when Martha wraps her arms around him and Jonathan joins her. It’s been *so long* since he felt his father’s embrace.

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He takes the truck back, of course. With a lifetime of knowledge and experience, he understands why Jonathan can’t let him keep it. And he really needs to see Lex again.

Just like he remembers, Lex is not at all offended when Clark tells him he can’t keep the truck. “Your father doesn't like me, does he? It's okay,” he says, his voice resigned. “I've been bald since I was nine. I'm used to people judging me before they get to know me.”

Sudden anger rises up in Clark, burning in his nerve endings. Was he the only person in Lex’s life who ever believed in him? And then he betrayed him too. Not this time. He forces his jaw muscles to relax, his fists to uncurl. “That’s not fair. What you look like or who your father is shouldn’t matter.”

Lex's lips twitch. "Thank you, Clark. But your father figures the apple doesn't fall far from the tree, doesn't he? That's understandable. What about you, Clark? Did you fall far from the tree?"

"You have no idea," Clark mutters. He really wants to tell Lex everything—the words are there on the tip of his tongue… but he swallows them back. It's too soon. He'll have to tell him, but not yet. Clark remembers years together, a friendship that became something more, and then something less, but never what he really wanted it to be—but Lex doesn't know him yet. By Lex's perspective, they just met. He'll scare Lex off if he blurts out his secret now.

"Clark…" Lex takes a step toward him, and Clark's mouth goes dry. The Lex he knows—knew—was still sexy as all hell, but this Lex… his youth gives him a rawness that affects Clark—and this hormonal teenage body—in a way that's about to be embarrassing. "Do you believe a man can fly?"

Trying to focus on Lex's words, Clark fastens his gaze on Lex's face, away from his distracting body. "Sure. Why not?" *God* , he misses flying. That was one of the last abilities he developed while growing up, but it has been so many years and he forgot what it was like to be *unable* . He can run faster than a Japanese bullet train and leap over pretty much anything—not that there's much in Smallville to test him —but there was a freedom in flight that he never found anywhere else.

An indulgent smile crosses Lex's face. "I'm not talking about riding in an airplane. I'm talking about soaring through the clouds with nothing but air beneath you."

Clark smiles back, holding Lex's gaze. "Yeah. Me too." He's sure there must be a wistful look in his eyes but he refuses to feel embarrassed.

A few moments of silence stretch out as Lex's smile fades into a thoughtful expression. He studies Clark intently. "I did," he finally says, his voice so soft a human would have to strain to hear. "After the accident, when my heart stopped. It was the most exhilarating two minutes of my life. I flew over Smallville, and for the first time, I didn't see a dead end. I saw a new beginning. Thanks to you, I have a second chance. We have a future, Clark... and I don't want anything to stand in the way of our friendship."

His throat so tight he can't reply, Clark only nods. They have a future —God, how he wants that. Last time, Clark stood in the way: Clark

and his secrets and lies. He will not do that again. This is his second chance— *their* second chance.

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He's feeling pretty good about himself when everything goes to hell. Damn it, he should have remembered Whitney had Lana's kryptonite necklace. Getting caught like that *again* is just embarrassing. And hanging from that stupid cross is *mortifying*. He hates feeling helpless —*being* helpless.

Lex pushes his way through the cornstalks right on schedule, and Clark can barely lift his head to see him. The chain around his neck feels like it's holding a *planet*… except he's moved planets that weren't this heavy. It's such a tiny piece of kryptonite, but he has no resistance to the stuff. After years of Lex using it against him, he'd like to think he built up *some* immunity and a piece this small wouldn't affect him so much—but he's not in that body anymore. This body's exposure is limited to whatever happens to be lying around in Smallville.

"Clark?" Lex doesn't hesitate to reach up and untie the ropes that are binding Clark. "Who did this to you?"

"I have to stop him." His arms free, Clark falls into the dirt, barely managing to get his hands out to catch himself against the—thankfully —soft ground. "He's gonna kill everyone."

"Who?" Lex's hands are warm against his arms and back, helping him up. "Clark, you need to see a doctor."

"No. There's no time. I have to stop him." Clark tries to take a step forward, and loses his balance, nearly face planting again. Shit. He *really* hates being helpless.

"Whoa!" Lex catches him, steadying him with one hand on his shoulder and one on his forearm. "At least let me give you a ride."

About to protest, Clark bites back the words. There really is no time, and he can't run until the effects of the kryptonite wear off. "Okay. But, first, can you get this necklace off of me?"

Lex gives him an odd look, but obliges, tucking the chain into a pocket. Clark will have to explain later, but for now, Lex simply helps him to the car and drives him to the school. The trust in these simple actions nearly brings Clark to tears *again* , and he silently vows that he will not betray that trust this time around.

Stopping Jeremy is easier this time, knowing exactly what he's going to do. Clark feels a pang of guilt when the boy loses his memory, but he isn't sure how to avoid that, and it's probably for the best. Jeremy had too many painful memories.

Science Fiction

When Lex tries to give him a ‘Trojan Horse’ to use against Whitney —“Take the battle of Troy. It started because two men were in love with the same woman: kind of like you and the quarterback. That's why he strung you up in that field, isn't it?”—Clark is already backing up before he opens the lead box. He still feels it, though, the weakness that catches him in an unyielding grip, sapping the strength and energy from his body. “Clark, are you okay?” Lex asks, voice sharp with worry.

“No.” Clark takes a breath to ask Lex to close the box, but Lex is already snapping it closed, his sharply intelligent eyes fastened on Clark. Bracing his hands on the back of the couch, Clark breathes slowly in and out. Concern and confusion war for dominance on Lex’s face—so much more expressive than the Lex Clark is used to. “It’s… that stone.” Clark waves a hand toward the box. “The… meteor rock. It’s radioactive.”

A thoughtful frown tugs at Lex’s brow and he studies the box, probably hoping he might have a chance to study it later. “So, this is from that meteor shower eleven years ago? When Lana’s parents died? Isn’t a bit morbid for her to wear this?”

Guilt stabs Clark, familiar and sharp even after all this time. He knows intellectually that the meteor shower wasn’t his fault, but it was because of him, and that’s enough to make him feel responsible. “Yeah. She wears the necklace as a reminder, and to get some kind of power over it or something.”

Lex’s frown deepens. He raises his eyes to meet Clark’s, and there’s that familiar look in their depths, the one that says he knows there’s something Clark’s not saying. “You almost passed out, Clark. Why doesn’t it affect her—or me?”

“It does. Everyone reacts differently.” He rubs the back of his neck, trying to decide how much to say. “Remember that kid at the prom? Jeremy? He could manipulate electric currents because of the radiation.”

Lex runs his long fingers over the surface of the box. “You do realize this sounds like science fiction.”

A laugh escapes Clark. “I do. I really do.” Sometimes it feels like

everything about his life is science fiction.

“And it makes you sick.” Lex tips his head slightly to one side. “Is the lead enough of a barrier? Are you all right now?”

“Yeah.” While it’s definitely been an annoyance when Lex lines his labs with the stuff, lead does have its uses. And, right now, Clark is thankful for it.

“Well then. Here.” Lex offers the box.

Right; of course. Lex thinks if Clark gives Lana back her necklace, she’ll fall into his arms or somesuch romantic nonsense. But Clark no longer wants that. He spent so many years pining after Lana, and it took him way too long to realize that he wasn’t in love with her; he was in love with an ideal that he thought she embodied. It was never fair to either of them. Shaking his head, he says, “Lex, I…” He trails off, searching for the words. It’s Lex he wants to win, not Lana, but he can’t blurt *that* out now.

“What is it about Kents and gifts?” Still holding the box out at arm’s length, Lex shakes it a bit. “Tell Lana what happened with the quarterback. Trust me—you'll win her heart.”

“I don’t *want* to win her heart!” Clark closes his eyes and sucks in a breath. And he just blurted *that* out. Years of experience and he’s *more* likely to word vomit now than the first time he was a teenager. Back then, he was always so terrified of saying the wrong thing and giving away his secret. Now he just wants to tell Lex everything.

There is a puzzled expression on Lex’s face as he slowly pulls his arm back. “I thought that was the whole point. Everyone in Smallville knows that you’ve been pining after Lana Lang for pretty much your whole life.”

“I’m just a stupid kid, Lex!” Dropping onto the couch, Clark rubs his hands down over his face. Some days he feels like he’s a hundred years old, but he really is still just a kid, physically if not mentally and emotionally. Though the jury’s still out on his emotional maturity. “I thought I knew what I wanted, but… I didn’t.”

Carefully placing the box on the mantel, Lex sits down on the other couch facing Clark. “And now? Do you know what you want now?”

“I…” Clark shakes his head, biting off what he wants to say. “I’m starting to figure it out.” That’s a lie; he wants Lex so badly it almost

hurts. He swore he wouldn't lie to Lex again, but if he tells him *that* … well, he just can't. Not yet.

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The setting sun through the open window in the loft sets Lana in silhouette. Clark stops at the top of the stairs. His original teenage self would be in awe of the picture she makes: the fading light creates a halo of gold, giving her an ethereal, angelic quality. She really is very beautiful, and he is reminded why he had such a crush on her. Now, though, he drops his eyes, not comfortable staring at a teenage girl, no matter that he is no longer interested in her. "Lana."

She turns and smiles, her face lighting up with that smile that used to make him weak at the knees—or was that her kryptonite necklace? "Your mom said I could wait up here. Hope you don't mind. This is an amazing place."

"Thanks." He runs his thumb over the rough wood of the railing. "My dad built it." Jonathan called it the Fortress of Solitude, and Clark forgot how much *warmer* it was than the one in the Arctic. Not just physically warmer—*emotionally* warmer. The Kryptonian stronghold was stark and inhospitable—Clark felt more alien there than he did anywhere else.

Turning toward the telescope pointed out the window, Lana laughs a bit nervously. "I didn't know you were into astronomy."

"Yeah. I…" Shit. Young Clark may have used that telescope to study the heavens, but he spent at least as much time aiming it at Lana's house as he did the stars. God, he was a creepy teenager!

"Did you know you can see my house from here?" She's watching him now with eyes that hold much more intelligence than anyone gives her credit for—including him. It took him years to see her as more than a trophy to be won, and by then he had lost her forever.

"Yeah. I'm sorry." He reaches out and tips the telescope with one finger so it's pointed up into the sky.

Her smile returns, brighter than before. "You're probably wondering what I'm doing here."

He's not. He remembers this, knows exactly why she's here. But he's not about to say so—that would be incredibly rude, acting like he expects an apology for something that wasn't even her fault. However,

unwilling to lie, he merely shrugs and says nothing.

She wraps her arms around herself, gripping her biceps. “I found out about what Whitney did to you, the whole scarecrow thing, and I came to apologize.”

He nods. “Thank you, but it’s not your fault.”

“But he had no right to do that to you.” Her voice is soft, but firm. That’s Lana, has always been Lana: gentle with a core of steel. He used to think she needed his protection, but she proved many times that she was well able to handle herself, even going toe-to-toe with the Luthors and coming out on top.

He fiddles with the focus on the telescope, avoiding her gaze. This conversation was exciting the first time, to have the object of his every dream and desire in his space, talking to him, *touching* him. Now, though, it’s only a painful remember of so many poor choices. And Lana is a person, not an object. “Really, it’s okay. I’m fine.”

“I didn't come here to defend him.” She takes a step toward him, places a hesitant hand on his arm. “I came here to see you.”

He looks at her hand, and he remembers how delighted he was that Lana was finally seeing *him,* seeing Clark, and not that klutzy kid who always stumbled and stuttered around her. This time, though, he doesn’t want to encourage her—while he also doesn’t want to hurt her feelings. With no idea what to say, he falls back on the script in his memory. “You know, we've lived a mile apart our whole lives, and this is the first time you’ve come over?”

“Yeah, well…” He raises his eyes to meet hers, and she holds his gaze as she says, “Maybe I’m trying to make up for all that wasted time.”

A sudden desire to laugh grips him, and he presses his lips together until he can speak calmly. At one time, this was all he ever dreamed of, but now? “Lana, Whitney’s a good guy. He made a mistake, but I don’t hold it against him.”

Her face falls, and she pulls back, hugging herself again. “I thought he was. I thought I knew him, but… what else have I been blind to?”

He feels a pang at her sudden distance, but leading her on would be unfair. Whitney was—is—a good guy. Clark remembers how happy Lana was with Whitney when Clark wasn’t interfering. Sure, Whitney made mistakes, but Clark made bigger ones. They were teenagers.

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Gaining his abilities all over again is… interesting to say the least. Xray vision throws him—not as badly as the first time, but still suddenly randomly seeing through things without being able to control it is… bewildering. Learning to control it is easier with the knowledge he has, but he still must teach his young muscles how to work again. Heat vision is a lot easier to control, which really shouldn't be surprising. He's had years of sexual frustration in which to practice.

He still misses flying. Once a week or so, he goes out to Chandler's Field and climbs the windmill, makes sure no one is around, and jumps off. Without the irrational fear of heights he used to suffer from, it is merely an exercise in frustration. Controlling his landing grows easier each time, but he cannot stay in the air despite his best efforts. He imagines it's like if a human were suddenly unable to walk. Despite knowing that he will eventually learn again, it's maddening to think it could be years before he does.

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Cassandra doesn't frighten him this time, despite her unsettling eyes that look right through him. "There is nothing I can tell you, Clark. You already know more than I could ever see."

"You… I… what?" For someone who made a career out of words, he's not doing that well with them right now. He wasn't sure before if she really could see the future, but if she knows just by looking at him that he's not from this time…

She smiles that mysterious smile of hers. "There are those who would kill for the chance you have, Clark, to do it all over again."

He bites his lip. She does know. Maybe she can answer a question that's been bothering him for months. "I'm not… I'm making different choices, changing things. Is that—what if I make things worse?"

Cassandra's smile tips to one side. "If you can ask that question, then you're not that different from everyone else. Seeing the future—or living it—doesn't help as much as you'd think it would."

"Yeah." Clark sighs. He didn't really think she could help him, but it was worth a shot. "The more I change, the less I know."

She nods. "Exactly."

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Clark walks into the echoing room, his footsteps dragging. It still feels too soon to tell Lex his secret, and yet… this feels like the perfect moment. The twisted wreck of the Porsche lies in state in the centre of the room, lit by floodlights, like an odd piece of modern art. “Lex,” he says quietly. “You wanted to see me?”

Lex trails his fingers over the hood next to the dent where it hit Clark. “I once read about a rich man who survived a hotel fire.” His voice is soft, yet intense. “He hung onto the ledge for an hour before the fire department rescued him. Afterwards, he bought the hotel and always stayed in that room.” He turns around, slips his hands into his pockets and fastens Clark with a piercing gaze. “When they asked him why, he said he figured fate couldn't find him twice.”

Clark walks forward, studying the car. Lex has been to see Cassandra, and whatever she said must have really gotten to him. Making a slow circuit of the wreck, Clark eyes the roof he peeled back like the top of a sardine can. He stops next to Lex, copying his posture by stuffing his hands in his jeans pockets. “Is that why you kept it? But you haven’t restored it.” He nods at the car. “Do you believe in fate?”

Lex blinks and turns surprised eyes on him. “No. I don’t. But…” He looks back at the car, his gaze turning thoughtful and distant. “Every time I look at this car, I wonder. I had a team go over this thing inch by inch. They tell me there's no way the impact could have ripped open the roof like this.”

Nodding slowly, Clark lifts one hand and runs his fingertips over the jagged edge of metal that used to be the roof. When it happened, he didn’t even think about it; he just tore it open as if it was paper. “Like soggy paper,” he whispers.

Turning a sudden frown on him, Lex asks, “Do you remember anything about the accident?”

There it is: the question he cannot dodge without lying like he always did before. “Yes.” The one syllable comes out so quiet that Clark isn’t sure if Lex hears him. He swallows hard and turns to meet Lex’s eyes, curling his fingers into his palms to stop their shaking. His voice is loud and clear when he says, “I do.”

Lex just stares at him, his lips parted slightly as if about to say something, but he is silent. Waiting for Clark to continue.

Clark has faced beings with the power and will to destroy planets, he has fought enemies whose abilities rivaled his, and he has died—but none of that scared him like this does. If it's too soon, revealing the truth now could push Lex away forever; but if he lies, he's making the same mistake he did before. And that ultimately pushed Lex away too, and made him a mortal enemy. He's not going to lie to Lex again. "It was terrifying," he admits. "I was standing on the bridge and… I looked up just as you hit me."

A sharp gasp escapes Lex and his eyes widen, but he still says nothing. He is so still he could almost be carved from marble.

Ducking his head, Clark shoves his hands into his pockets again. "I've always known I was different. I can do things no one else can do. But I didn't know I would walk away from *that* without a scratch." He turns back toward the wreck and reaches out one hand to run his fingers along the jagged edge of the roof again. A human's fingertips would be torn bloody by the sharp metal that curls easily away from his unaffected skin as he applies pressure to it. "I tore the roof off to get you out. It was easy—like tearing soggy paper."

"Clark—" Lex's voice, usually so smooth and calm, sounds strangled.

Fingers tightening on the sharp metal, crumpling it further, Clark bows his head. "I'm not human, Lex. I wasn't even born on Earth."

There is a long moment of silence while Clark cannot bring himself to move or speak, then, "You're… you're not green. And you don't have antennae." There is a hint of humour in Lex's tone, and Clark turns around in surprise. Lex is smiling, which is not the reaction Clark expected… at all. He's not really sure what he expected, but… humour?

"You don't believe me?" Somehow he'd never considered Lex not believing him. As an adult, Lex never had trouble believing any of the incredible things that happened around him and to him, and back when they were young the first time Lex had always seemed open to believing pretty much anything, despite Clark's constant lies.

"Clark." Lex steps forward and puts his hands on Clark's shoulders. "I didn't say that. You're my best friend and I trust you. And, honestly, this explains a lot."

There's a lump in Clark's throat, and he can't help but lean into Lex's touch. "You're not… angry? I'd understand if you didn't want to be my friend any longer."

Lex's fingers tighten on Clark's shoulders. "Trust me Clark: our friendship is going to be the stuff of legends."

The lump in Clark's throat dissolves into a warmth that diffuses through his body, prickling at his eyes and sparking at his nerve endings. His gaze flickers to Lex's lips and it is an effort not to lean forward and kiss him. He's pretty sure it's still too soon for that.

So it's a shock—though a very welcome one—when Lex kisses him.

End Notes

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